

THE BRIDGES OVER THE LACHLAN RIVER COWRA

The first bridge constructed at this site was an American all-timber McCallum truss bridge of three spans. It existed from 1868 until replaced in 1893 by a bridge designed by John A McDonald.

The McDonald bridge was the first in New South Wales to use a composite timber/iron truss and was the largest of its type in Australia. The bridge carried the busy north-south inland road traffic for 93 years until 1986, when it was replaced.



1868 McCallum truss bridge, with new McDonald bridge in background



1893 McDonald truss bridge

John McDonald came from England. He joined the Department of Public Works, NSW in 1879 and from 1889 to 1893 was Engineer for Bridges. McDonald made a significant contribution to bridge design in NSW. His achievements include redesign in 1886 of the standard PWD truss to produce the "McDonald Truss"; design of all the lattice girder road bridges from 1884 to 1893; design c. 1884 of a series of sliding bridges at Lismore, Coopernook and Erina; and design of early bascule and lift bridges such as over the Darling River at Bourke in 1883. McDonald died in 1933.



1893 McDonald truss bridge

In 1990 one of the McDonald truss spans that had been erected in Bryant Park, was awarded an Historic Engineering Marker plaque by The Institution of Engineers, Australia. However, it was demolished in 1999 because it had become unsafe.

The existing seven span bridge comprises two prestressed concrete, continuous box girders. It was designed by the then Department of Main Roads and opened in 1986.

